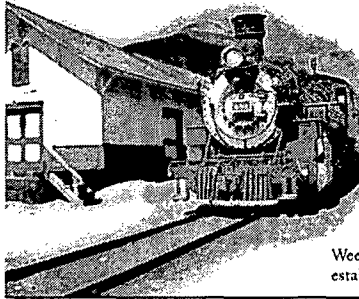


# Welcome, Iron Horse riders!

Volume 136, issue 48 May 26, 2011



## Silverton STANDARD & the MINER

Weekly Miner  
established 1875

SILVERTON'S PIONEER NEWSPAPER SINCE 1875

Silverton Standard  
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### INSIDE: D&SNG train schedule

See Page 8

### IN BRIEF

#### Fire Dept. to wash Greene Street Friday (if it stops snowing)

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#### Sen. Bennet to be in Silverton on Monday

Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., will be in Silverton on Monday, May 30 at 2:30 p.m. at the Brown Bear Cafe.

He would love to meet with constituents, according to his staff.

#### Memorial Day observance planned

Silverton American Legion Post #14 will be placing American flags in Hillside Cemetery at the resting places of veterans in recognition of Memorial Day at 5 p.m. on Friday, May 27.

All community members and veterans are encouraged to participate and honor all veterans, said Gary Davis, post commander.

On Memorial Day (Monday, May 30) an 11 a.m. ceremony will be conducted by the Legion post at Memorial Park. Participants are asked to muster at the Legion Hall at 9 a.m. Post members and veterans are all invited to attend.

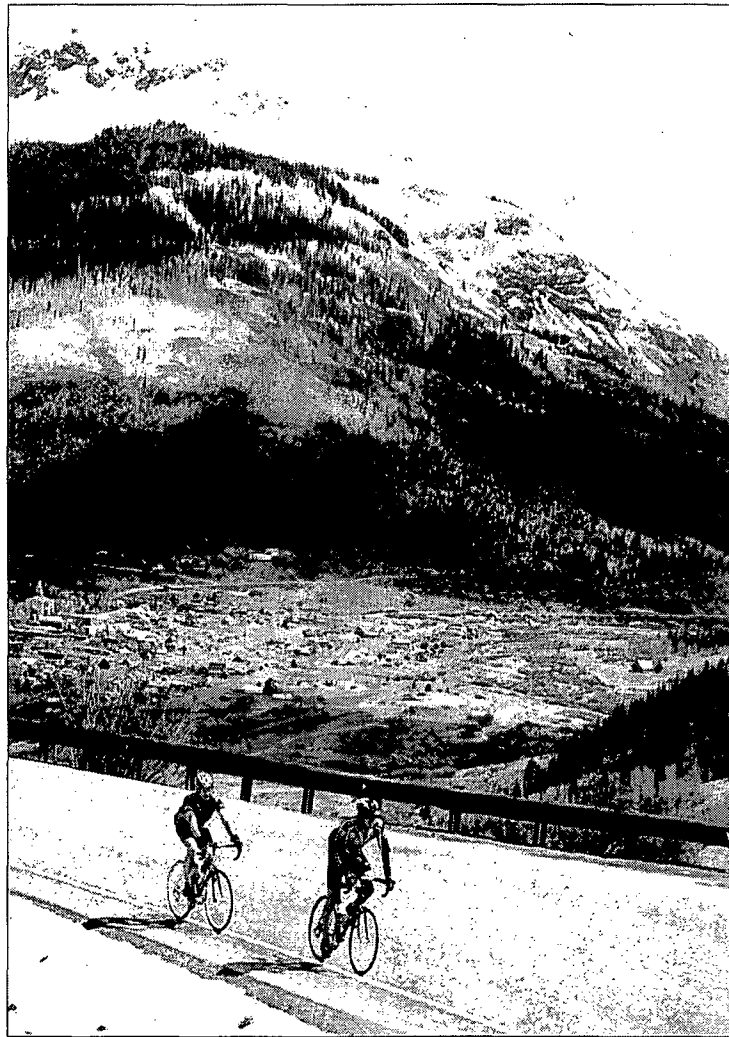
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Information on grant and loan opportunities for businesses, nonprofits and government will be presented on Tuesday, May 31, at Town Hall.

The event, from 9 a.m. to noon, will be an opportunity to learn about funds available for the community via the US Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development

See BRIEFS, Page 4

## PEDALING OVER THE PASS



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### 40th anniversary party planned in Memorial Park

By Mark Esper

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"We're expecting nice weather and there's fresh snow on top of the peaks," said race director Gailge Sippy. "We're super excited."

He said with the bicyclists' entourages, "we'll explode the size of your town by about 4,000 people." "This weekend of events will be the largest Iron Horse Bicycle Classic ever," Sippy said, with a total of some 3,600 riders from 44 states and five countries taking part in various events.

A celebration marking the race's 40th anniversary will be held at Memorial Park.

"We've got birthday cakes coming your way, and a band in the park," Sippy said.

Also in honor of the 40th anniversary, two participants this year will be Tom and Jim Mayer, former Durango residents "who dreamt it all up back in 1971," Sippy said.

In a re-enactment of that



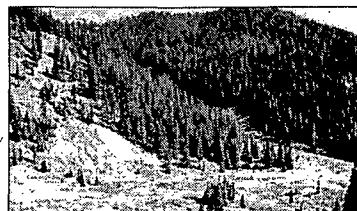
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See IRON, Page 6

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Water pours out of the Red & Bonita Mine, over a pile of mine waste and into Cement Creek near Gladstone in this September 2010 photo.



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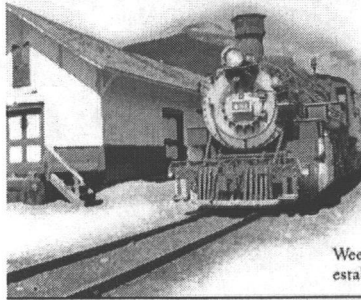
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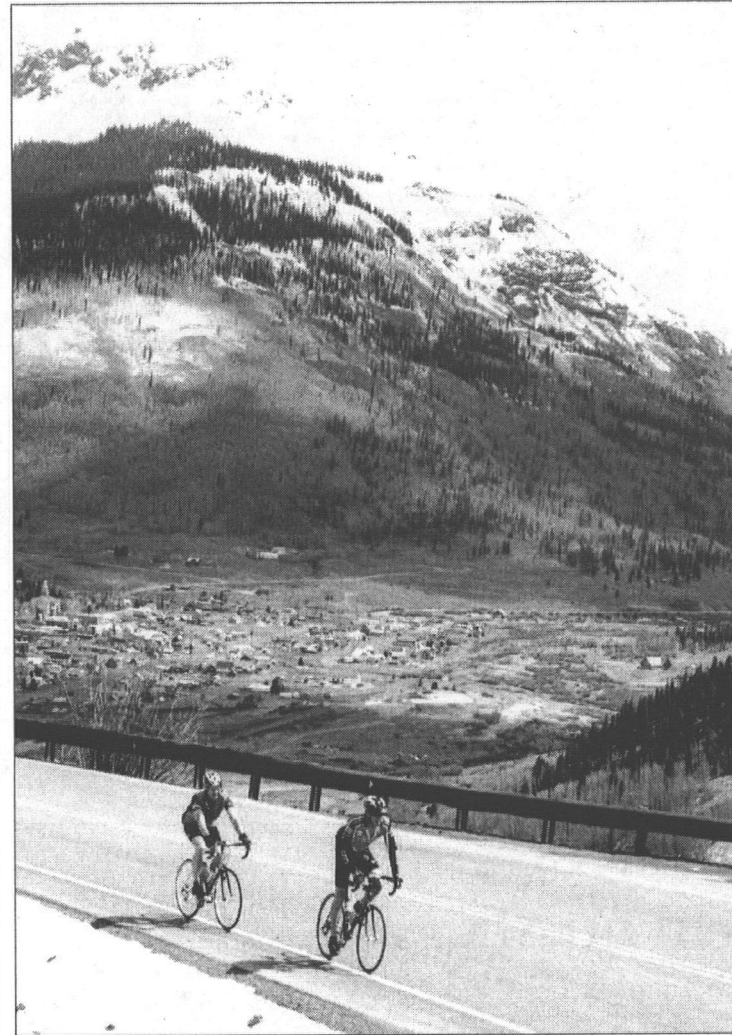
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#### Contacting us

**In Person:** 1315 Snowden St., Suite 308 (Upstairs at the historic Miner's Union Hospital building)

#### Telephone:

Editor: (970) 387-5477  
Advertising: (970) 387-5477

#### Mail:

Silvertown Standard  
P.O. Box 8  
Silverton, CO 81433

#### E-mail:

Editor:  
editor@silvertownstandard.com  
Advertising:  
silvertownads@gmail.com

#### Staff

Mark Esper: Editor  
Kately Fetchenhler: Advertising

**Subscriptions** are \$24 per year for Silverton residents; \$48 per year for all other deliveries by U.S. mail. Digital e-mail delivery is available at \$26 per year.

#### Our goals

The *Silvertown Standard & the Miner* is a weekly newspaper written for people interested in the issues and news of Silverton, Colo., and the surrounding San Juan Mountains region. The *Standard* voices a strong sense of community for Silverton and the San Juans as it brings you the issues, characters, landscapes, and the talent of the region. Stressing in-depth, balanced, and thoughtful writing, news, photography, and topical articles on key issues affecting the region, the *Standard* keeps the greater San Juan community informed, entertained, provoked, and engaged in dialogue about the community and its future.



#### 2011 Member

#### Colorado Press Association winner:

- ☐ Best news content for a small weekly, 2007;
- ☐ Best photos and design, 2008.

#### 2010 CPA awards:

- Best Business Story
- Best Education Story
- Best Headline Writing
- Best News Page Design
- Best Editorial Layout & Design
- Best Photo Essay
- Best Special Section
- Best Newspaper Promotion

## Please help museum grow

Dear Friends,  
We've painted ourselves into a corner. It's hard to imagine that we have gotten this far, but we are running out of room at the Mining Museum.

We have used the southwest corner of the basement as a large workroom and also used it for storage of timber, lumber and various artifacts. We are at the point now where we will begin building various headings and tunnels in this room to show how drift or tunnel mining was done, while putting many of the drills in our collection on display.

For many years, the northeast corner of the basement has been used as our woodshop. It is here that we keep our large saws and store our tools. In our plans for the future we hope to put a shaft and head frame on the surface with a tunnel leading to the bottom of the shaft from the back

### GUEST OPINION

**How you can help:**  
Donations may be sent to San Juan County Historical Society, P.O. Box 154, Silverton, CO 81433

of the woodshop. In order to accomplish this we have to move the woodshop.

We have decided the best way to do this is to put an addition on the back of the museum that can house our woodshop and rock saws on the main floor, and much needed display space and a room for clean work (including artifact restoration) on the upper floor.

We have raised some money for this project from various sources but realized that we have to approach our membership to raise the rest. We know these are tough economic times, but are

asking you to give us a hand in finishing the museum. It's been a labor of love this last decade with a lot of time put in by a small group of dedicated individuals who believe in bringing the fascinating story of our mining history to light.

With your donation you can be a:

Nipper for \$25  
Trammer for \$50  
Slusherman for \$75  
Miner for \$100  
Shift Boss for \$200 (or more)  
Thanks for taking the time to read our "call for help." Make sure you stop by at the museum. We know you will be impressed by what we have accomplished.

Sincerely,

Zeke, Jerry, Scott, Steve, Bev, Dave, Brian and Patty  
Your San Juan County Historical Society Board of Directors



## The season in question

By Freddie Canfield

Memory does not always serve us well. Being the official cooperative weather observer here in the high San Juans allows your correspondent to dig through many years of meteorological data. This May I have also dug through nearly two feet of snow.

It isn't always this way. May 2009 was warm and rainy — no snow was recorded by yours truly. May 2009 definitely qualified as "spring."

This May and many others have not — by what folks at lower elevations associate with the season that follows winter.

Around here the season in question appears to be missing once again.

Instead, we are experiencing plenty of solid precipitation, chilly wind, overcast skies, and of course, the resulting mud. So where is spring?

If you look closely, tiny willow leaves are attempting to reach toward the all-too-often hidden sun. Gold in the form of dandelion blossoms are brightening the increasingly verdant hills close to town. Miniature yellow-eyed grass flowers are

Date	High	Low	Precip., conditions
May 18	41	25	.65, 7", overcast
May 19	39	26	.14, 8", overcast
May 20	42	27	.17, 2.3, overcast
May 21	48	28	Mostly clear
May 22	60	29	Partly overcast
May 23	55	30	Mostly clear
May 24	45	28	.2, 0.4" snow, clear
Total snow for season: 107 inches — over 17 feet!			

### WEATHER AND OBSERVATIONS

bursting forth.

Sounds of springtime occur increasingly in the form of bird song. Early and late robins and white-crowned sparrows bring joy to the hearts of those who like our feathered friends are out of doors in often inclement weather.

Swallows and hummingbirds, along with those unlikely ibises, actually appeared a day earlier than last May. Last May they stayed for the entire season. Thus far this year those seasonal visitors reappear between storms.

Bears have shown up at the transfer station at the same time as every other year — except 2010 when one appeared two weeks early.

The moose that never left last fall is still enjoying browsing in the willows up in the side canyons. Other members of his family group and

See WEATHER, Page 3

### FROM THE STANDARD MAIL CAR



### Providing access to OHVs a positive move

Editor;

On behalf of the thousands of individuals and dozens of business members of the Alpine Triangle Coalition — all the sportsmen, the off-road enthusiasts, the history buffs and back-country adventurers — we applaud the San Juan County commissioners for their decision to allow OHVs (Off-highway vehicles) access to county roads and closer proximity to Silverton businesses. We encourage the town council to follow suit.

This is a positive move at fostering economic development for the hard-working folks of Silverton who rely almost exclusively on tourism and recreation for their way of life and their prosperity.

We're hopeful the commissioners will continue to make decisions that promote the recreation and tourism businesses in the Alpine Triangle.

Keep up the good work.

Tony Inda, the Alpine Triangle Coalition, Silverton, Durango, Lake City & Ouray

### Doing their jobs on fire safety rules

Editor;

As an attendee of the City Council's May 9 meeting, it was my understanding that the council approved the use of the home on 740 Reese Street for MSI to use as an educational institution contingent on an inspection by the fire marshal.

The recent burning of two historical buildings on Main Street should be proof of how fast and hot these old buildings in town can burn. As a native Silvertonian, I have witnessed several of the old buildings burning to the ground, including one in which a man lost his life.

It seems to me that Dee Jaramillo and David Zanolini are doing the job they are being paid to do by addressing safety issues in the building.

Sue Sanders, Silverton

### We'd be better off without the EPA

Editor;

I noticed in the last *Silvertown Standard* that the EPA is trying to justify its existence by cleaning up Cement Creek, ergo by cleaning it up so that fish can survive in the water.

Dream on.

There have never been any fish in Cement Creek for over a million-plus years.

See LETTERS, Page 8

### Write to us

The *Silvertown Standard & the Miner* welcomes letters to the editor. Send letters via e-mail to editor@silvertownstandard.com, or via snail mail to, Editor, *Silvertown Standard & the Miner*, P.O. Box 8, Silverton, CO 81433.



## ANIMAS, from Page 1

what solutions are out there," said Peter Butler of Durango. He and Silvertonians Steve Fearn and Bill Simon coordinate the stakeholders group.

At a public information meeting last week at Town Hall, the coordinators reviewed what the group has accomplished since its founding in 1994. And they discussed remaining challenges to cleaning up environmental problems left from decades of mining in the upper Animas basin.

The Animas River Stakeholders Group was formed as a collaborative approach to water quality issues in the region and as an alternative to a Superfund designation in the area. It includes representatives from the EPA, Colorado Department of Health and Environment, the San Juan Public Lands Office, and community members interested in water quality issues in the upper Animas Basin.

**No easy solution**

Fearn said the stakeholders learned earlier on that they were facing a very complex problem.

"Most importantly we discovered we didn't really know what was going on" with water quality problems in the Animas. Fearn said the complex geology of the San Juans results in a lot of natural discharge of minerals and metals and it is difficult to assess how much of the mineralization is due to mining activities.

"There are about 1,500 mine sites in San Juan County," Fearn said. "We wanted to get a handle on which were the worst polluters."

Butler said studies of sediments in the Animas provide evidence of a 10-fold increase in metals in the river, compared to the days before mining started here in the 1870s.

For decades, mine tailings were being discharged directly into the river. Later, tailings ponds were developed to reduce the level of heavy metals getting in the stream.

The stakeholders group concentrated on the 200 mine waste sites and 185 or so draining adits that were "the most substantial polluters in the basin," Butler said. In studying those sites, the stakeholders found the problem was even more highly concentrated

"Some 33 of the draining mine sites accounted for 90 percent of the metals from all the draining mines," Butler said. And of the 200 mine waste sites, 34 of them were found responsible for about 90 percent of the pollution from such sites.

"We only had to deal with 77 sites to get a reasonable impact," Butler said. "That's what we've been working on ever since. Since that time we've been doing remediation."

Butler said about two-thirds of the 34 targeted mine waste sites have been cleaned up, but only about seven of the draining mines have been addressed.

Response is complicated by local ownership of many of the sites and liability issues involved with cleaning them up.

The ARSG has backed so-called "Good Samaritan" legislation that would limit liability for those trying to clean up old mine sites.

Butler said that even if all the



Mark Esper/Silverton Standard & the Miner

From left, Steve Fearn, a mining engineer from Silverton, Sabrina Forrest, site assessment manager for the Environmental Protection Agency's Denver office, Kay Zillich of the Bureau of Land Management, and Peter Butler of the Environmental Protection Agency's Denver office, discuss water quality issues associated with mine runoff above Gladstone in this September 2010 file photo. In the background, water pours out of the Red & Bonita Mine, over a pile of mine waste and into Cement Creek.

mine-related sources of contamination were to be addressed, there would still be a substantial water-quality issue.

"We won't have aquatic life in Cement Creek or upper Mineral Creek — ever," Butler said, due to the natural mineralization. "Other areas will have limited aquatic life, such as lower Mineral Creek."

Other areas, such as the Animas River above Cement Creek, have "quite a bit of life" but water quality remains below EPA standards due to the unique geology here.

And South Mineral Creek and Cunningham Gulch are seeing good water quality.

**The bottom line**

Since the ARSG started work in 1994, Mineral Creek has improved, the Animas above Cement Creek is showing "mixed" results on water quality, while Cement Creek water quality is worsening, along with the stretch of the Animas below Silverton.

The rivers are being hampered by high doses of manganese, zinc, copper and cadmium, Butler said.

"It really depends on which drainage you're in," Butler said. "But the Animas below Silverton has gotten quite a bit worse than it was in the 1990s. Fish populations are down, bug populations are down."

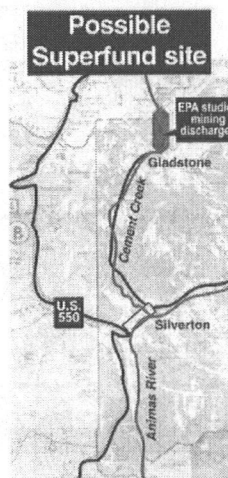
Simon added that apparently three of four trout species that once thrived on the Animas near Cascade Creek have disappeared.

"We had four species," Simon said. "We're down to one."

Butler said the sole remaining species turns out to be the one that's most tolerant to metals and acid mine drainage.

As for the specific problem in the Gladstone region, it goes back to the Sunnyside Mine sealing the American Tunnel, allowing the water table to rise dramatically. Opinions differ on the connections — direct or indirect — between the tunnel and other mines at higher levels.

But mine openings at higher levels have seen their discharges



**"It's still going to be a community decision. You will be hearing more from the EPA. We all agree it's a major problem, but it's not clear if it's bad enough for Superfund."**  
Peter Butler

Increase in recent years as the water table in the mountain rises.

The Sunnyside operated a water treatment plant at Gladstone until 2003, when it was turned over to a small mining company. About a year later, that plant was shut down as the operator proved unable to maintain it.

By then Sunnyside had been released of any liability through a complicated consent decree with state regulators.

And as the water recharged above American Tunnel, discharges increased from nearby mine portals, including the Mogul, Gold King #7, and the Red & Bonita mine.

"Certainly there were some

who felt the state shouldn't have signed off on that consent decree," Butler said.

Before it was shut down, the treatment plant at Gladstone had been treating 1,200 to 1,600 gallons per minute. That same volume of water now flows to the Animas untreated.

And even as the American Tunnel flow was minimized, contaminated water gushes more and more from other mine openings at higher levels.

**What's to be done?**

Suggested solutions to the problem at Gladstone:

- Remove the American Tunnel bulkheads and treat the drainage.
- Pipe discharges from the four most leaky mine openings to a treatment plant.
- Treat a portion of the Cement Creek flow near its confluence with the Animas River at Silverton.

- Bulkhead the four big drainages at Gladstone.
- Some combination of the previously listed options.

Of course the big issue is who would pay for it.

"These things take a lot of money and somebody's got to be responsible," Butler said.

One idea is that a new mine operator could start up and take over treatment responsibilities.

Another idea is Superfund. Superfund is officially called the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act.

Enacted by Congress in 1980, it created a tax on the chemical and petroleum industry to establish a trust fund for major environmental cleanups.

And the law provides for liability of persons responsible for releases of hazardous wastes.

The first step of the process for listing Superfund sites is for the EPA to do a preliminary assessment and inspection. If the site is deemed hazardous enough, it is placed on a National Priorities List and a plan is developed to remediate the contamination.

EPA site assessment manager

Sabrina Forrest said she is still reviewing draft data prepared by a contractor to determine if the Gladstone complex of mines is eligible for Superfund.

And she said community support will weigh heavily in the process if indeed the site is deemed eligible.

"We really honestly have no desire to drag a community into a Superfund designation," Forrest said.

**'Pollution trading'?**

Todd Hennis, president of San Juan Corporation, owner of the Gold King Mine, said liability should fall on the Sunnyside's parent company. He blamed the bulkheads in the American Tunnel for causing mines he owns to be flooded.

"And the water table is still rising," Hennis said. "It's probably at 1,500 to 1,800 feet (above American Tunnel)."

Hennis accused Sunnyside and Colorado water quality officials of "pollution trading" which resulted in a "shuffling of the deck on the water to have it come out other openings."

"The state made a very, very bad deal," Hennis said.

And Hennis said Superfund is not the answer.

"The soft and fuzzy image of Superfund is the furthest from the truth," Hennis said. He pointed to the town of Leadville's experience, which resulted in much controversy.

Hennis said Superfund designation would dash hopes of ever reopening mines such as the Gold King.

Hennis backed the concept of having a new mine operator take on the task of dealing with the current water-quality problems.

"The Gold King is the best hope this town has for the future," Hennis said. "There are more than 400,000 ounces of gold in it."

Hennis said the "push" for Superfund could result in "a horrible, wrenching event for this community."

**Hearing more from EPA**

"There are a lot of differing viewpoints on these issues," Butler said. "It's still going to be a community decision. You will be hearing more from the EPA. We all agree it's a major problem, but it's not clear if it's bad enough for Superfund."

Silverton resident Melody Skinner said at least Superfund would get the problem addressed and provide needed jobs too.

Skinner, who lives along Cement Creek, said she has witnessed tremendous progress in water quality there since the mines closed in 1991.

"I've seen a huge improvement. I'm dismayed to learn it's (more recently) gone down hill. It's not only affecting fish, it's affecting everything else."

Simon said Superfund is one of many potential solutions.

"Maybe it will be the best way to go to solve this issue. I don't know," Simon said. "But we're not just going to fall down for Superfund."

"I doubt you could find consensus among the stakeholders to bring Superfund in," Fearn said. "But if you don't want Superfund you've got to come up with a better idea. That's basically where it's at."

## LETTERS, from Page 2

Anyone who thinks otherwise lives in La-La land.

The natural erosion which has a lot of iron oxide eroding into the water keeps the Ph too high to support fish. The mines contribute very little pollution in comparison to the natural erosion, which the EPA cannot fix!

So my solution is to totally defund the EPA as they are totally useless. (Remember the last Superfund we had that accomplished absolutely nothing and made everything worse?)

The only thing the accomplished was to shut down min-

ing, which was our main industry and provided a vibrant population the best per capita income in the state. The last producing mine shut down in 1991 and we lost two-thirds of our population and we became the third lowest per-capita income in the state in just two years.

Now our only industry is tourism, which is very shaky with the economy we now have.

How long are we supposed to abide by these draconian government idiots who have only one purpose — to maintain the power and their useless jobs?

Wiley Carmack, Silverton

## Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad timetable: Summer 2011

Dates	Depart Durango	Arrives Silverton	Depart Silverton	Arrives Durango
Through June 5	8:30 a.m. 9:15 a.m.	noon 12:45 p.m.	2:15 p.m. 3 p.m.	5:45 p.m. 6:30 p.m.
June 6-Aug. 11	8:30 a.m. 9:15 a.m. 10 a.m.	noon 12:45 p.m. 1:30 p.m.	2:15 p.m. 3 p.m. 3:30 p.m.	5:45 p.m. 6:30 p.m. 7 p.m.
June 20-Aug. 6 (Mon and Thurs)	8 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	1:45 p.m.	5:15 p.m.
Aug. 12-Oct. 13	8:30 a.m. 9:15 a.m.	noon 12:45 p.m.	2:15 p.m. 3 p.m.	5:45 p.m. 6:30 p.m.
Oct. 14-Oct. 29	8:30 a.m.	noon	2:15 p.m.	5:45 p.m.

Ride the afternoon train from Silverton to Durango and take a late bus back to Silverton:

June 6-Aug. 12: Depart Silverton on 1:45, 2:15 or 3 p.m. train; arrive in Durango 3-1/2 hours later. Depart Durango on 7:15 p.m. bus. Arrive in Silverton at 8:45 p.m.

Take any train to Silverton and ride the late bus back to Durango:

June 6-Aug. 12: Depart Durango on any scheduled train; depart Silverton at 8:50 p.m., arrive in Durango at 10:20 p.m.

Tickets at Silverton Depot or call (888) 872-4607 or visit [durangotrain.com](http://durangotrain.com) online.

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The Silverton Standard's

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PO Box 1, Silverton, CO 81069 or call 970-387-5477

## It's back to the future at dump

### Flat fee to go on utility bills; no more paying at the transfer station

The Silverton Town Council approved a change in transfer station fees Monday night that will see the town revert to the system and charges in place in 2009.

Last year, the town lowered its basic fee but started charging for disposal of noncompactable items. Now it's back to the old rates with a new contractor in place.

The landfill charge is now \$21.65 per month, or \$43.30 on

each bi-monthly bill, per EQR. Water and sewer rates are \$73.24 and \$79.14, respectively.

"Therefore each bi-monthly bill (assuming single-family residence) will be \$195.68," said Town Clerk Brian Carlson. "This increase will be seen on the next billing statement, which will be sent during the first week of July, and which reflects charges for the months of May and June."

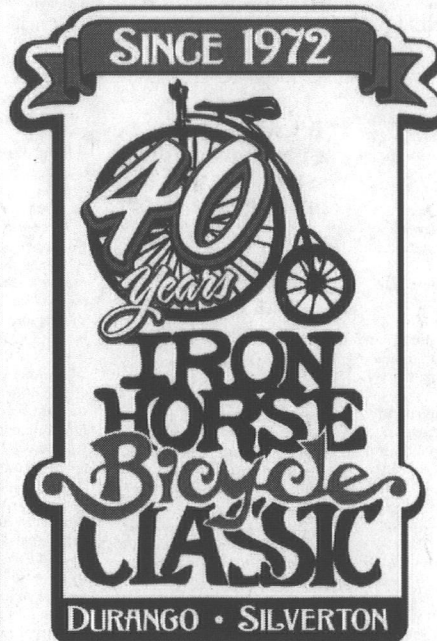
In exchange for the price increase, customers will again be allowed to deposit non-compactable refuse(except for construction debris) in any quantity.

Construction debris will be measured and billed at \$35.71 per cubic yard.

"Tires are currently not being accepted at the transfer station," Carlson said. "The Town is working with Bruin waste to find a solution to tire disposal. This may be resolved by mid-summer."

Used cooking oil is also not being accepted. The Town has contacted third-party service providers to establish a central collection point for used cooking oil. This too may be resolved by mid-summer.

## Thank you Silverton for 40 years of hospitality & support!



Just a reminder, the road from Silverton to Durango Mountain Resort will be closed from 8:00am until 1:15 pm to cars except for emergency vehicles on Saturday May 28th.